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CASEY FOUNDATION'S DAVID SANDERS AND USC'S DEAN OF SOCIAL WORK MARILYN FLYNN APPOINTED TO THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Two nationally renowned experts in the field of child welfare and social work have been named to the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection by Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas.

Dr. David Sanders, former head of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services who is now executive vice president of systems improvement for Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest operating foundation dedicated solely to providing and improving foster care, and Marilyn Flynn, dean of the USC School of Social Work, have accepted their appointments and are eager to begin their work.

The independent commission, composed of two appointees by each of the supervisors, is charged with rigorously examining why child protection reforms at the Department of Children and Family Services as well as other county agencies have not been implemented. The commission is expected to make its recommendations for an overhaul by December.

"It is my hope that with this commission we will begin to see true change in Los Angeles' foster care system," said Chairman Ridley-Thomas. "David Sanders and Marilyn Flynn will bring innovative and progressive ideas on how to reform the system. Their expertise is internationally recognized and they will bring to the commission years of experience and knowledge. I am confident that their contributions will greatly benefit not only the commission but ultimately Los Angeles County's children and families and beyond."

The motion comes on the heels of the deaths of several children, including 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez who died in May amid revelations that the L.A. County Department

of Children and Family Services and other agencies failed to intervene despite multiple abuse allegations made by family and teachers.

Dr. Sanders comes back to Los Angeles after his widely respected term as head of Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services from 2003 to 2006. In 2006, he was appointed to the Philadelphia Child Welfare Review Panel, which made several recommendations leading to deep reforms for the troubled department. Six years later, the department has made "remarkable progress in protecting the city's most at-risk youth," according to the agency's 2012 Annual Report.

Dr. Sanders has received several awards for his service including the 2008 Grace B. Flandreau Award from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, recognizing his significant contributions to juvenile justice and child welfare. This year, he was awarded the United Nations Public Service Awards for his achievements and service to the community.

Dr. Sanders graduated with honors from Princeton University with a bachelor's degree in psychology and received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Minnesota.

"I'm deeply honored to be asked to be a part of this commission," said Dr. Sanders. "It is critical that the commission provide a road map for the county to improve safety for the children of Los Angeles. What I hope is that I can contribute some knowledge about both the department and the county in ways that will help not to look at the past but to look forward and improve outcomes for children."

Dean Flynn has been a national leader in graduate social work education, noted especially for her advancement of intervention research. She helped found the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare and was the first President of the St. Louis Group, representing most U.S. based schools of social work in major research institutions. She is also the chair of the Inter-University Consortium Department of Children and Family Services, which seeks to incorporate the most innovative teaching methods at all six universities in social work in Los Angeles County.

Under Dean Flynn's leadership, USC significantly expanded its Hamovitch Center for Science in the Human Services and recruited a nationally recognized faculty to conduct clinical and intervention studies in health, mental health, aging and child maltreatment.

Under her leadership, the school received funding from Congress to establish the Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans and Military families, focusing on the mental health needs of service members and their families. With Ms. Flynn, the commission will have access to one of the nation's most cutting edge institutions for social work training and degrees.

She received her Ph.D. and Master of Social Work from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she specialized in social policy and economics, and subsequently served on the faculties of the University of Illinois, the University of Michigan, and Michigan State University.

“It’s a moment of great opportunity,” said Dean Flynn. “We have a new director, heightened public interest and a real commitment from all major groups for real change. This is an opportunity to think about how to bring best practices to the work force responsible for helping at-risk families and children.”

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